

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1683
AMEMBASSY LISBON NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO COMUSFORAZ IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL OPORTO
USCINCEUR
CINCLANT

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJ: FLAG INCIDENT: BACKGROUND AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S
COMMUNIQUE

1. BACKGROUND: ACCORDING TO AN AZOREAN OFFICIAL, THE PONTA DELGADA CITY COUNCIL, AT THE SUGGESTION OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER ELECTED ON THE SOCIALIST TICKET, DECIDED TO FLY THE AZOREAN AUTONOMY FLAG TOGETHER WITH THE PORTUGUESE FLAG IN THE SQUARE NEXT TO CITY HALL. THE FLAGS FLEW WITHOUT INCIDENT FOR TWO DAYS UNTIL SOMETIME MAY 14 SOMEONE IN PONTA DELGADA CALLED LISBON TO COMPLAIN. AS A RESULT THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE LAMENTING THAT THE FLAG REPRESENTING THE MINORITY VIEWS OF SEPARATISTS WAS DISRUPTING THE RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY. THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO CRITICIZED THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INACTION. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESPONDED BY STATING THE CITY COUSCIL OF PONTA DELGADA HAD DECIDED TO FLY THE AZOREAN FLAGS AS A SYMBOL OF AUTONOMY AND THAT IT (THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT) WOULD NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHATEVER MIGHT

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HAPPEN IF THE FLAGS WERE REMOVED. (NOTE: WE DO NOT YET HAVE THE TEXT OF THESE TWO COMMUNIQUE BECAUSE NEWSPAPERS IN PONTA DELGADA HAVE NOT APPEARED DURING THE HOLIDAYS.) APPARENTLY THERE WAS SOME QUESTION ABOUT THE DESIGN OF THE AZOREAN FLAGS FLOWN IN THE SQUARE BECAUSE A SMALL DIFFERENCE IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE STARS IN THE FLAG MEANS IT REPRESENTS INDEPENDENCE INSTEAD OF AUTONOMY. HOWEVER, THE REGIONAL

GOVERNMENT'S COMMUNIQUE MADE IT CLEAR THAT, REGARDLESS OF THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE STARS, THE CITY COUNCIL MEANT THE FLAGS TO REPRESENT AUTONOMY.

2. REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S MAY 16 COMMUNIQUE: THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ON THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 16 ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT IT "ADVISED THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES IN SUFFICIENT TIME OF THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACT OF FORCE AGAINST THE DECISION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF PONTA DELGADA ABOUT THE PLACEMENT OF FLAGS SYMBOLIZING, IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CITY COUNCIL, AUTONOMY...". "THE MISREPRESENTATION OF THE MEANING AND THE BLOWING OUT OF PROPORTION GIVEN TO THESE EVENTS IN LISBON CORRESPONDS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT TO A DIVISIONARY MANUEVER WHICH IT (THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT) FRONTALLY REPUDIATES, WITH THE AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCE THAT THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC IS INVOLVED" (INFORMAL CONSULATE TRANSLATION). IN ADDITION, THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT, NOTING IT IS THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF THE AZORES, DEPLORED THE VIOLENCE AND APPEALLED FOR CIVIC PEACE.

3. BOMB AT NAVAL RADIO STATION: EARLY IN THE MORNING OF MAY 16 A BOMB EXPLODED IN FRONT OF THE NAVAL RADIO STATION IN PONTA DELGADA AND REPORTEDLY CAUSED SOME PROPERTY DAMAGE.

4. COMMENT: SEEN FROM THE AZORES, THE REMOVAL OF THE AZOREAN FLAGS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF UNNECESSARY REGIDITY ON THE PART OF PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES WHO WERE WARNED THAT IT WOULD LIKELY PROVOKE A REACTION . THE AZOREAN FLAG DOES NOT FLY FROM FLAG POLES PLACED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY SQUARE NOW, BUT DOES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FLY FROM POLES ATTACHED TO DIFFERENT PRIVATE BUILDINGS FACING THE SQUARE. THIS APPARENTLY IS ACCEPTABLE TO PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES. THE TYPE OF THINKING WHICH ORDERED THE FLAGS REMOVED IS THE TYPE OF MENTALITY WHICH PLAYS INTO THE HANDS OF THE SEPARATISTS, AND DISCREDITS LISBON IN AZOREAN EYES. ONE POLITICAL CASUALTY OF THE FLAG INCIDENT MAY BE THE SENSE OF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENT EANES. INCREASINGLY, AZOREANS HAD BEGUN TO BELIEVE THAT EANES UNDERSTOOD THE AZOREAN SITUATION AND WORKED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE REGION. IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY HOW MUCH DAMAGE THE EANES - AZORES CONNECTION MAY HAVE SUFFERED. MEANTIME, CALM AND A HOLIDAY MOOD REIGN IN PONTA DELGADA. PFEIFLE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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